

The Yoga Roots of Polarity Therapy

A Non-Traditional View on Yoga, Spirituality, Energy and Meditation

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Introduction

Two years ago, I took a class on the Psychology of Yoga with Eleanor Criswell-Hanna. This class spurred me on to do some research to find out what kinds of traditional esoteric systems the main principles and theory of Polarity Therapy were based on since I had been curious about that for a long time. I found a lot of the information in Georg Feuerstein's The Yoga Tradition, an overview of the many branches of Indian yoga philosophies. I also have consulted numerous other books on energy healing, energy systems, and energy medicine. I thought that what I found might be of interest to the Polarity community. With this in mind, I wrote this paper. But there was another reason for writing it: For decades, I have been exposed to many lineages of spiritual teachings and to two major energy medicine systems, the Chinese Acupuncture and Acupressure and the Polarity energy model of healing. These thoughts and systems, I took, at first, for granted. What I was taught I understood to be the truth. In the course of teaching Polarity for many years, however, I have found a different view: on the one hand, there is the Polarity theory that I teach, but on the other, each student perceives energy in a unique way, using different subtle sensory channels and different combinations of them. I have come to believe that no theory of energy flow and no spiritual teaching could be absolutely true. It is always limited by the form it was given by its original perceivers. Since no two people perceive energy and truth the same way, any theory on energy flow and any spiritual teaching has to be paraphrased as this school's, this teacher's, this tradition's particular view. It has been my passionate undertaking to clarify this understanding, and to formulate my own view on energy flow and spiritual reality, after researching the traditional yogic views that are a major portion of the foundation for Polarity. It has

been a rewarding pursuit. It also has opened my eyes to how much esoteric information we, in the West, have taken in from the East, and taken for granted without ever questioning. For me, personally, this has changed. Writing this paper has been the last act in a process that had been gestating for many years, a process of finding my own, experience based, truth. It has been a truly liberating event.

Now, two years after starting this paper, I have just been in another class with Eleanor Criswell, Biofeedback and Somatic Psychology. Here, I have found more information that helped me formulate the conclusion I came to in writing this paper, that energy systems while being a very helpful map for the territory of any energy work are not the territory itself. To explore the territory, each of us must walk in it, individually, using our own awareness in the present and creating our own inner knowing of the territory through our unique kind of perception.

In the first part of this paper, I will simply gather the facts about the Yogic sources of the Polarity theory. In the second part, I will describe my understanding of two concepts, meditation or the practice of presence and Alice Miller's term of "poisonous pedagogy." This serves as a prelude to my actual evaluation of the Polarity theory and its influences, which follows, in the third part. In a final part, I explore the possibility of making direct contact with energy and thus transcending the system, in this case the Polarity theory, and how biofeedback can help with this endeavor. It is my goal to help empower the students and practitioners of Polarity to have the most educated understanding of the theory of Polarity and to be able to trust themselves, above all, in their own knowledge and perception of energy flow and truth, through direct experience, from within.

Part One: The Spiritual Sources of the Polarity Theory

Ayurveda

In my research, I learned that the Polarity theory has borrowed mainly from three sources, the ancient yoga of healing or Ayurveda, the ancient esoteric teachings of Tantra Yoga, and Surat Shabd Yoga or the Yoga of the Audible Life Stream, also called Sahaja Yoga, which was the spiritual path Dr. Stone followed.

First, I will describe the tradition of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is based, mostly, on Samkhya yoga, a branch of yoga comprising many schools, which is often called the theoretical aspect of yoga. Samkhya is concerned with enumerating and discriminating the elements that make up the universe. It is an ontology, a science of being. (Ayurveda is often called the science of life). Dr. Vasant Lad writes in his book, Ayurveda, The Science of Self-Healing: “All Ayurvedic literature is based on the *Samkhya* philosophy of creation. (The roots of the term *Samkhya* are two Sanskrit words: *sat*, meaning “truth,” and *khyā*, meaning, “to know”). He continues: “The ancient realized beings, *rishis*, or seers of truth, discovered truth by means of religious practices and disciplines. Through intensive meditation, they manifested truth in their daily lives. Ayurveda is the science of daily living and this system of knowledge evolved from the *rishis*’ practical, philosophical and religious illumination, which was rooted in their understanding of the creation. “

“{The *rishis*} perceived, in the close relationship between man and the universe, how cosmic energy manifests in all living and non-living things. They also realized that the source of all existence is Cosmic Consciousness, which manifests as male and female energy - *Shiva and Shakti*.” Dr. Lad then goes on to describe how the originator of the *Samkhya* philosophy, Kapila, discovered twenty-four principles or elements of the universe. These principles are to be seen as a step-

Note: Although the Polarity theory was also inspired by Hermetic philosophies, Hebrew esoteric knowledge (such as the Kabbala), the teachings of the alchemist, Paracelsus, and Christian Mysticism, as well as by ancient Chinese healing wisdom, these will not be discussed here, being far beyond the scope of this work. To learn more about these influences, please see J. Godwin’s, Robert Fludd, Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Two Worlds as a starting point

down hierarchy from universal source to the “ten thousand things” of the manifest world. This hierarchy of creation starts with a universal Source, (the Divine, which has different names according to culture), and a universal step-down into polar forces, the polarities that are the foundation for life as we know it. This is the polarity of Yin and Yang, of Polarity Therapy, and of the three cosmic principles (*gunas*) of *satva* (neutral, source,) *rajas* (or yang, the positive, outgoing energy,) and *tamas* (or yin, the negative, receptive or in-going energy.) From there, Samkhya recognizes various levels of pre-mind step-downs, and then various levels of mind, and then the five elements, sense organs, sense faculties, and motor-activities governing the physical body. From the ultimate Source, energy steps down through these various levels to the level of the physical mind-body system that is made up of the elements, borrowed from nature, and of consciousness, as a microcosm mirroring the universal macrocosm. In Ayurveda, the five elements and their inter combinations build the foundation for a whole psycho-physiological healing system with correlations in the emotions, the chakras from the throat down, (fifth to first chakra,) the organs and physiological functions governed by these chakras, the five senses and related motor activities, the movements, physiological survival drives or instincts, and the fluids and tissues.

An important aspect in Ayurveda is the three *doshas* or body types, (the equivalent of the “humors” of air, bile, and mucous in the Medieval western healing arts). These are an intertwining of the elements: *vatta* (ether and air), *pitta* (fire and water), and *kapha* (water and earth). All of these aspects are also part of the theory on which Polarity therapy is based. This is a story of creation, the same as I teach in my Polarity classes. (, 1984, p.17; Feuerstein, 1998, p.101.) An interesting part in Dr. Lad’s brilliant, concise description of the elements of the universe is that he writes that the Creator, or the father of all creation, *Purusha*, and also the three *gunas* or

cosmic principles, *satva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, which are the essential substance of all manifest things in the universe, are usually viewed as a part of *prakriti*. “*Prakriti* creates all forms in the universe, while *purusha* is the witness to this creation. It is primordial physical energy containing the three attributes, or *gunas*, found in all nature, the evolving cosmos,” (Lad, 1984, p.18).

Tantra Yoga

A second portion of the Polarity theory is derived from the Tantra tradition. From this tradition comes the idea of a subtle energy body that is related to the physical realm and serves as a bridge between the physical realm and Ultimate Reality. In his chapter on The Esoterism of Medieval Tantra Yoga, in Yoga Tradition, Feuerstein talks about *prana*, (life force) and *kundalini-shakti*, the universal energy potential that is dormant at the root of the spine. He further mentions the energy currents or *nadis*, three of which are described in detail: The primary current, *sushumna*, located in the spinal canal, and the two polar currents, *ida*, (the “pale”, negative or moon current), and *pingala*, (the “reddish”, positive, or sun current), which curl around the spine like the two snakes of the Staff of Hermes or the Caduceus. The *ida* and *pingala* cross over the spine in several places and create the chakras. The characteristics and functions of the chakras are described in detail. There are also up to 72,000 other energy currents or *nadis*. Motoyama describes the main ones as very similar to the Chinese meridians, (Motoyama, 1995). A picture of the *nadis*, in Feuerstein’s book, Tantra, The Path of Ecstasy, shows an image of a rich network of currents that really look similar to the Chinese Acupuncture meridians (see picture in appendix.) All these facets of the subtle energy body that Feuerstein describes as part of the ancient Tantric teachings are part of the Polarity theory. In our practice, we work with this knowledge. The only aspects that I did not find any

details on are the three types of etheric energy currents that we also work with: the five long, watery currents flowing longitudinally on each side of the body, in opposite directions; the east-west, neutral, airy currents that coil around the body horizontally, in opposite directions; and the positive, fiery, spiral currents that spiral out from the navel, and opposite the navel from L2/3, in opposite directions. However, I assume that these are also part of the *nadi* system.

Sikhism and Sahaj Yoga, the Yoga of Enlightenment

The last Yogic influence on Polarity theory comes directly from Dr. Stone's spiritual path, Surat Shabd Yoga, or Sahaja Yoga, which is described in The Path of the Masters, by Julian Johnson. The teachings of this path not only include some of the previously mentioned elements of Polarity theory, but some aspects that are not found anywhere else. The elements, and also the hierarchy of creation and the chakra system, are part of these teachings as well. However, the emphasis here is mostly on the higher regions, from the third eye up toward the ultimate Source. Let's have an overview of these teachings before I go into the comparison with the Polarity theory. I feel that it is important for Polarity practitioners to be familiar with one of the major sources from which Dr. Stone got his inspiration for developing the healing system of Polarity Therapy.

Sahaja Yoga is the mystical foundation of Sikhism, just as Sufism is the mystical foundation of Islam. To get a better understanding of the Path of the Masters, I will start out by giving a brief description of Sikhism itself. In the chapter on The Yoga in Sikhism, (in The Yoga Tradition), Georg Feuerstein describes the spiritual tradition of the Sikh as a yoga that incorporates Karma-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga principles and practices and is also a synthesis of Hindu devotionalism and Islamic Sufism. It is, in essence, a yoga of Unity. The Divine is seen as the Creator who is both transcendent and

immanent, pure Being and the Creator. Illusion and the ego are seen as the cause for experiencing duality and separation, and for forgetting God's true nature, which is the unity of one great Being. In order to realize this unity, disciples must try to actualize unity in all thoughts, words, and actions and practice the presence of God by feeling the Divine everywhere in every moment. To them, God is "the writer, the tablet, the pen, and the writing." This discipline inevitably leads to a lifestyle that has integrity, and so the principles of Karma-Yoga become very important. Right conduct in life is an important feature in the Yoga of Unity. It is seen as even more important than Truth and as leading to liberation all by itself. One activity that supports the practice of the presence of God is the constant remembrance of God's name (which is a form of Bhakti-Yoga.)

But spiritual discipline is not enough. God's Grace is also needed to help the disciple move along the five stages on the spiritual path. These five stages are the realms of virtue, of knowledge, of effort, of divine action, and of truth. The realm of divine action is the stage of the great masters, a stage in which action comes from a place of unity with the Divine. If a disciple meditates deeply upon the Divine, he can hear the "unstruck sound" which is capable of dissolving the ego and changing the self-facing disciple into a guru-facing one. As mentioned before, Sikhism is a synthesis of Hindu devotionalism and Islamic Sufism. (Yoga Tradition 1998, p.443-448). To summarize this description, the Sikh path is one of loving devotion to and focus on the Divine, of the practice of Right Living, and, eventually, as the spiritual discipline bears fruit, of the experience of ecstasy, *ananda*, and unity with the Divine or Creator. Georg Feuerstein calls it embodied liberation, *jivan-mukti or sahaj* ("spontaneity or naturalness"), The Bhakti aspect of devotion is not only directed toward the Divine, but also

toward a guru or master who helps the disciple on his journey toward unity.

Now let's go back to Surat Shabd Yoga, Dr. Stone's spiritual path. This path, The Path of the Masters, adheres to Sahaja Yoga, the Yoga of Enlightenment. First, in his book The Path of the Masters, Julian Johnson, a long-time disciple on this path, examines the main religions of the world in order to draw conclusions about their validity and their limitations in comparison with the Path of the Masters. He concludes that Taoism is very much like what the Masters teach. Both Taoism and Sahaj yoga promote a state of naturalness, of easy flow with life. But there is a difference in perspective: In Taoism naturalness is the path, in Sahaj yoga it is the goal (enlightenment) after years of hard practice. To me, there is a big difference between these two.

Johnson also explains that this path is very close to the teachings of Sikhism, except that Sikhism uses a scripture as the ultimate teaching of truth while the Masters see the presence of a living Master as essential for teaching the truth. (Historically, there were Masters in early Sikhism too, but later the scriptures were revered instead.) He also describes the four divisions in nature, the realm of Ultimate Reality, the mental or causal realm, the astral or etheric realm, and the physical realm. Johnson then goes on to describe the characteristics and duties of a real Master and his function in relationship to his disciples. The point he makes is that it is not possible to achieve enlightenment without the expert guidance of a living Master. He examines the meaning of the word God, and states that the Masters see only one reality, that of the Creator, and that this reality is present in all of life's forms and expressions, from the highest to the lowest, even in the forces of darkness. Man is seen as the pinnacle of creation because he can, with the help of a living Master, travel beyond all the realms of creation's hierarchy and reach "home," or Source, and become one with God.

Then Johnson describes the psychology of the Masters, which is an analysis of man. Here, he writes about the soul that has to put on a "diving suit" to be able to handle the pressures of the environment in the material realm. This diving suit is the body/mind. The mind itself, is shown to have four sub-levels or qualities: *manas*, the lower mind, experiencing through the senses; *chitta*, filtering experience through emotion; *buddhi*, the intellect which is discriminating and deciding; and *ahamkar*, the function of the ego or "I" which executes orders. The five passions and virtues are also part of the teachings of this path. They guide man either upward or downward on the path of evolution and karma. (Similar sub-divisions of the mind are also found in other yoga traditions, and a set of similar passions is found in Tantric texts.)

The chakras and energy body of man are described as well, but not much importance is given to them. Johnson writes that the Masters practice soul travel and wander through many higher regions beyond the chakras that they describe. Many quotations from ancient Indian and other mystical texts are presented showing that the Masters, too, have received and synthesized their teachings from earlier sources of wisdom.

A rigorous preparation of the disciple is emphasized for him to get ready to embark on his spiritual journey through the higher regions toward "home" or self-realization. A solid morality, based on the precept that all existence is One, is the first requirement. For this requirement, four qualities of mind must be studied: 1. Scattering, (the most troublesome quality), 2. Darkening, (all the bad stuff), 3. Gathering, (the quality to overcome the previous two), 4. Concentration, (the one-pointed form of mental action, which, ideally, leads to *samadhi*). Further, the Christ mentality of devotion and service, the Gita ideal of discipleship (choiceless obedience), the study of the perennial knowledge of

truth as a preparation for the experience of it, and the destruction of desire, (man's worst enemy), are the stepping-stones of this preparation. Desires are seen as drawing us to the senses, the senses as overwhelming the mind, and the mind as enslaving the soul.

The only antidote for desire is the Sound Current, the experience of becoming One with all existence, with the Source of all Being. Briefly, the Sound Current is the positive energy of Creation, which comes from Source and moves down into matter and enters as body-mind at the third eye. It is complemented by the Light Current, which moves back up to Source. Johnson thoroughly describes the Sound Current and discusses parallels to this concept in Sufism, ancient Persian mysticism, and other traditions. Johnson summarizes the science of the Masters in these words: 1. The Master. 2. The Audible Life Stream. 3. Spiritual Freedom here and now.

The last chapter in Johnson's book is about the actual practice of this Yoga. Here, a description of the other branches of Yoga is given, such as Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. Johnson then states that the Yoga of the Masters is Sahaj Yoga, the yoga of "embodied liberation," the essence of all yoga paths. He declares the Yoga of the Masters as the oldest branch, a synthesis of the best of all teachings. It is a scientific system of exercises worked out by the great Masters and designed to help the student attain conscious union with God. Here, Johnson claims that no other spiritual path is capable of leading students to attain this goal. The journey toward union with God leads through the higher regions, from the third eye chakra upward. There are 22 major and minor energy centers between the third eye and the crown chakra, and eight more from the crown chakra to the ultimate Source of all Being. The energy centers discussed in the most detail are those last eight. These are described as regions of the mind, and beyond, with higher and higher frequencies and each with different qualities and tasks. Before the students have

prepared and purified their mind, body, and lifestyle, this journey upward through the eight regions cannot be started. The idea is that the disciples who follow this path first live and participate fully in the "horizontal" world. Once they are ready to begin the essential journey upward through the eight regions toward enlightenment, the Masters introduce them, at the right time, to each of the higher regions and its tasks and rewards. The ultimate goal is to become one with the Creator.

Sahaj Yoga and Polarity Theory

After having given a condensed description of this path, we can now look at which parts of these teachings are also present in the Polarity theory. The first thing that comes to mind is Dr. Stone's frequent statement that the purpose of life is to become one with the Creator. He also states that one cannot get liberated without a living Master. (Stone, pp.53, 142,143)

On a more practical level, the elements, chakras, energy currents, the passions and virtues, and the four realms of nature, (the spiritual, causal, etheric, and physical realm), are all part of the Polarity theory. The hierarchy of creation is part of Polarity's concepts. There is even one chart, in Dr. Stone's books, (in Volume II of Polarity Therapy, in the Evolutionary Energy Series, chart #11,) which mentions some of the higher regions. Dr. Stone also mentions the Sound Current that is at the core of Surat Shabd Yoga. He offers an interesting image for the symbol of the staff of the Caduceus, in connection with the Sound Current. "The staff in the center portrays the hearth fire and the chimney, down which Santa Claus descends and through which he returns to the Fountain of Energy above, after having distributed or deposited the gifts from the Source. Those who can understand this will realize that it is the secret of the stepped-down Sound Current of Spiritual Energy also known as "THE WORD" from higher regions, lost in

matter and physical generation". (Stone, 1986, Vol. I, Bk. 1, p.34) The Sound Current is the creative principle in the ultrasonic core, or primary energy current, we talk about in Polarity. *Kundalini* is a stepped-down version of the Sound Current, a fiery energy current of the mind substance. Dr. Stone also writes about the Kundalini, or sleeping serpent. It is the energy of the sleeping serpent in the sacrum that awakens when a seeker, through meditation, reverses the energy flow from going down and out into procreation, to rising up in order to eventually unite with its Source. (Stone, 1986, Vol I, Bk. 1, p.40, Bk. 2, chart 11)

To conclude this part of my paper, I want to quote Dr. Lad from his book, Ayurveda, The Science of Self-Healing, to show the inter-relatedness of the three Yogic sources of Polarity. He describes the three traditions of Ayurveda, Yoga, and Tantra as the "ancient life-disciplines that have been practiced in India for centuries." He says, "Yoga is the science of union with the Divine, with Truth." He continues saying that "Tantra is the most direct method of controlling the energy that creates the ultimate union with Truth; and Ayurveda is the science of life," (Lad, 1984).

Part Two: The Pitfalls of Spiritual Teachings

After having looked at the major Yogic sources for the Polarity theory, I will now evaluate them and their influence on Polarity in the light of my own experience. This, needless to say, will be my personal view, my truth that I have arrived at, for now. I hope that by sharing this I can stimulate other people to inquire and to find out what is true for them. Before I do this, however, I want to write about two major influences that have changed my view on spiritual teachings and practices and on my understanding of energy flow: Alice Miller's description of poisonous pedagogy, and Toni Packer's teachings on meditation. Here is a description of what I understand when I talk about meditation, and how Alice Miller's writings have influenced my view on traditional spiritual teachings.

Misunderstandings About Meditation

In her book, How Yoga Works, an Introduction to Somatic Yoga, (Criswell, 1989, p.35,) Eleanor Criswell writes: "[I]t is extremely important in somatic yoga or any other activity to be as sharply aware as possible of each movement of the body during the posture or practice. ... You must move slowly enough to be able to remain aware, mindful throughout the movement." In order to describe meditation, I would extend this statement by saying that it is important in meditation, in everyday life, and in each moment to be aware of everything that is experienced inside and outside, sensations, thoughts, sounds, visual impressions, feelings, whatever is there. Awareness is a soft attentiveness that allows for the whole picture in an all-encompassing way to be seen, felt, and heard. There is no specific focus except what pushes itself into the foreground. The kind of awareness I try to bring to a yoga posture, the movements of it, is what I want to bring to each moment of living. And in meditation, this

awareness is a non-focused openness, a space in which there is nothing else to do but be aware. This intensifies the intention without creating stress.

Many meditation teachings take another view. In various places, in her book, in which she describes the various traditional practices of Yoga, Eleanor points out that meditation is composed of two steps, concentration and clearing the mind. On page 79, she writes: "Yoga includes a number of activities which facilitate concentration. Meditation, the degree of concentration permitting, dawns in the conscious mind after extensive practice of concentration." And on page 89, the Patanjali quote says: "Meditation (*dhyana*) is an unbroken flow of thought toward the object of concentration." The dictionary defines "to concentrate" as "to bring or draw to a common center or point of union: converge; direct toward one point; focus..." Even though this practice helps many people, I have seen a problem occur with it: The danger is that a narrowing down of focus happens, a mental effort which involves thought and creates the possibility for frustration and a dualistic concept of what meditation is and what it is not. So many people say, "I couldn't meditate because my mind kept being busy and distracting me!" They think that meditation is having a quiet mind, being able to stay focused on the object of concentration, or perhaps that it is some diffused state of bliss. All of these states are wonderful, but to me meditation is broader, more inclusive than that.

Being aware, on the other hand, is defined in the dictionary as "having knowledge, [being] conscious, cognizant; alert; ... ME var. of *iwar*, OE *gewaer*, watchful; syn mindful." The word awareness, to me, describes this broader kind of meditation. Being watchful and alert or aware does not have an object. It simply is. It can happen no matter what life presents. When the mind is running amok, that can be seen. If it quiets down, that too can be seen. No need to do any specific technique. No need to try to clear the mind. The simple practice of being aware,

alert, in the moment, without preference for one focal point over another is enough. Toni Packer, author of The Work of This Moment (Packer, 1995) and The Light of Discovery (Packer, 1995) describes a baby following with attentiveness the changing movements of its environment: "Someone entered through the door. The baby looked up. In the total movement of his tiny body turning toward the door, the eyes watching the new person, there was simple attention. No "effort" was made to be attentive. A baby doesn't make an effort to be attentive. It just happens."

This description of meditation, of being attentive, suits me better than the practice of concentration and clearing the mind. It's straightforward, easy, and simple. I can grasp it without needing to read lots of books or going to spiritual teachers. I can do this when I sit quietly and all day long. And as I do this, life takes care of itself more and more.

Poisonous Pedagogy: Thou Shalt Not Be Aware

Alice Miller's book, Thou Shalt Not Be Aware, Society's Betrayal of The Child, (Miller, 1990), has had a profound influence on me regarding most spiritual teachings. Since reading it I have begun to realize that often the words and the whole language of some teachings, no matter how well meant, create a subtle barrier, a hindrance to understanding the practice. Zen stories and guidelines for meditation, yogic breathing and concentration techniques, concepts about energy or the path to enlightenment distract me and take me away from simply being present and aware of my experience. The language itself actually veils the truth and sets up a subtle hierarchy, in many spiritual teachings, of those who know and those who don't. This does not foster genuine, authentic knowledge through self-awareness. I prefer teachers who state their observations in a language that anybody can understand, and that is not shaming. These teachers encourage the knowing in the

student to unfold in an empowered way. The following are some examples of language of poisonous pedagogy in spiritual teachings I have heard or read: "This dirty mind!" or "we must crush the ego." "Desire is the enemy; it must be destroyed." "Sexuality is dangerous and a hindrance to spiritual growth," "Clear the mind," (as if the mind was an enemy who shouldn't be here). As I will show, these statements are misleading and not helpful to the seeker. If anything, they cause the disciple (= "child") to have even more shame and guilt than he/she already carries from similar poisonous pedagogy in childhood.

In a yoga class, I picked up a handout on the *yamas* and the *niyamas*. These are two of the eight limbs or rules of the eightfold path of classical Patanjali yoga. The *yamas* are things to avoid while the *niyamas* are things to do. To me, these guidelines for right living are unnecessary if a person is able to listen to his/her own intelligence inside. I believe that paying attention to the sensations, feelings, movements of energy and thoughts within provides all the information we need to know. When we're angry, that has to be acknowledged, felt, and then the appropriate action to take care of ourselves has to be taken. All impulses, if tracked down to their core and fully understood, are good, infinitely intelligent, wise, and offer perfect guidance for one's life.

Even though some rules might be helpful to certain people, I feel strongly that I would rather that people be taught how to connect with the wisdom within, in a more empowering way than the traditional yogic and many other spiritual teachings usually do. Instead of superimposing rules, the method I believe in is that of supporting the student's (seeker's, client's, "child's") own knowing. This method can easily be practiced in every teaching situation, starting with the task of the early parenting of children. In Thou Shalt Not Be Aware, (Miller, 1990), Alice Miller describes how society and many adult individuals unknowingly believe

and promote the commandment of "thou shalt not be aware" while pretending that this is for the child's own good. In essence, she shows that many parents don't help a child to become more aware of who she is and what she knows, but they mold her to become somebody the parents are pleased to see, somebody they believe will fit in with the current societal norms they subscribe to. Parents often believe that to raise her like this is in the best interest of the child. However, this treatment forces the child to disconnect from her own knowing and power. The unconsciously conveyed rules of society, that are thus handed down from generation to generation at an age when the child is most vulnerable to influences from the environment, are forcing the child to betray her inner knowing, to become the person her father or mother wants her to be and to give up being herself. The more intensely this training away from herself is implemented, the more she loses connection with herself. As an adult, then, she has to struggle long and hard in therapy and many spiritual and growth promoting settings to reclaim a sense of herself. To the extent that she can reclaim that sense, life can once again flow with ease, and be nurtured and guided from a well of spontaneous knowing inside.

This can only happen if the teachings and therapies she experiences are empowering her to reconnect with what is true inside. Unfortunately, many teachings and therapies only serve to perpetuate the societal denial and rules. In fact, many spiritual communities create a similar, subtle, unspoken, even unconscious pressure to conform to the specific group's norms. If a member has perceptions and thoughts that differ from the norm, chances are great that, in the group's environment, they get denied and repressed, or at least discarded due to doubt. It is a tragic fact that as adults we often perpetuate what was done to us when we were children by keeping the denial of our painful wounding that caused the disconnectedness from

ourselves intact and searching for the truth outside of us, at the feet of teachers, therapists, and gurus. Thus we become victimized again by poisonous pedagogy.

What Alice Miller writes about parenting and therapy, is also true for spiritual teachings and education in general. Society as a whole is not willing to take an objective, thorough look at how we as parents (therapists, teachers, etc.), because of our denial, raise our children to be disempowered. We cannot handle the truth that our parents failed us, and that we ourselves as parents fail our children to various degrees. It would help clarify things to put the blame where it belongs, with the parents, teachers, gurus, and therapists. Instead, to protect them, society transfers the blame onto the child, (client, student, disciple), shaming her and perpetuating her guilt, by keeping her from knowing herself and being empowered. If the "child" doesn't know herself, she will not be able to recognize and tell the truth about how she is hurt.

It is my observation that, in our society, it is not yet very common to talk about how parents, not just overtly abusive parents (teachers, gurus, therapists) hurt the child by applying poisonous pedagogy. It is also clear that every time they are unaware and less than unconditionally accepting and loving toward the child they hinder, if not destroy, the child's full blossoming into an empowered, self-referenced individual. This awareness is only now, and slowly, dawning on a few of us. In society at large, the child (client, student, disciple) is still seen as unconscious, as an extension and possession of the parents and the family, and sometimes as a piece for exhibition of the parents' pride.

Alice Miller does not stop at the conclusion that we as a society protect the parents and are in denial of their part in children's and adults' suffering. She extends this point to any settings in society that have to do with teaching or guidance. She shows that, in a subtle way, many theories and teachings serve to veil the truth

rather than uncover it. In this context she looks at Freudian psychoanalysis and, more specifically, at the drive and Oedipus complex theories of Freud which had such a profound influence on psychoanalysis. She also looks at popular fairy tales, myths, dreams, and art. She shows how many of these can be seen as preventing the truth from being discovered. This becomes especially clear when she shows how Psychoanalysts, for decades after Freud, were trained to regard patients' dreams and associations as pertaining to their fantasy life. She shows examples in which a client's accounts of childhood abuse are rationalized by fancy theories, instead of being taken seriously as real life events, therefore preventing the client's true healing from the trauma. She also demonstrates how famous artists' works and well-known fairy tales can, with this new awareness of society's denial, be understood and seen as tales of abuse and neglect through poisonous pedagogy. (When I speak of "poisonous pedagogy" I am referring to the methods by which children are raised, in parental unawareness, with imposed, rigid rules rather than with support for their blossoming as unique and valid beings). In many examples, such as that of the writings of Kafka, she shows that, if we are able to pay attention and really listen, we can realize that what is admired as art, or as wisdom from ancient times (in the case of fairy tales) is nothing but a true account of childhood abuse encoded into artful expression.

Reading Alice Miller has opened my eyes. I now see an element of poisonous pedagogy in the teachings of yoga and in many other traditional spiritual teachings, such as Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, etc. The language of yoga, for example, conveys a subtle hierarchy, from the top down, that implies that the student is ignorant and needs to be enlightened by certain rules and practices. In a subtle way, the student is made dependent on a teacher. In Christianity, the body- and woman-negative attitude and the concept of sin

create shame and cause seekers to mistrust their natural instincts. In Zen Buddhism, the strict, ritualized and idealized rules of behavior in the meditation hall evoke a subtle hierarchy of achievement. The higher the rank, the more adornments are on the robe, and it is assumed, also, that the more adornments there are, the closer the seeker is to enlightenment. This creates concepts, goals, and expectations in the mind of the adepts that distort their own, innate, spiritual experience and process. I have also seen very few spiritual teachings that do not describe human desire, the body, sexuality, so-called “negative” emotions, and the mind, as troublesome things and obstacles to spiritual development that should be avoided and transcended. With this, most of human experience is discarded as inferior, and the seeker is discouraged from trusting her own, inner experience and knowing the truth as it reveals itself! With these kinds of misleading teachings, it becomes much harder for the seeker to actually have access to the truth.

After reading Thou Shalt Not Be Aware, I suddenly saw how, any time an authority claimed that he knew, at the expense of someone who didn't know (the “child,” or the “victim”), this subtle perpetuation of the societal poisonous pedagogy was happening. My eyes were opened, not just to how children are taught to give away their power to others who supposedly know better, but also to the subtle hierarchies set up everywhere in society to perpetuate authority, power, and control. In spiritual teachings and schools, poisonous pedagogy is present whenever truth is taught in a specific form and when that form is given more emphasis than the individual perception of its essence. Another example is Western medicine because it uses an all-powerful medical authority, the M.D., to “teach” us about our health. Only slowly, for example, we women are waking up from the general hypnosis of what our mostly male doctors have taught us and are reclaiming

our own knowing and wisdom about how we can be healthy in puberty, child bearing, birthing, through the fertile years, and into menopause. We realize that to give away our power to these physicians has caused us a lot of suffering and has disconnected us from our natural physical instincts and wisdom.

In the case of spiritual teachings, I was shocked to realize that many of them, for example Sahaj Yoga, were patriarchal systems that used a hard-to-understand language which kept spiritual seekers in the dark about the truth and forever dependent on gurus and supposedly-enlightened teachers, and furthermore, they demanded unquestioning obedience in following the guidance of the teacher. These teachings, to me, suddenly looked very disempowering. The teachings of Zen, too, fall into that category. The stories, in Zen, are difficult for many to understand, and the ceremonies and rituals difficult to perform. All of these seem to serve only one purpose, to keep many spiritual seekers from easily finding out the truth for themselves. They are constantly under stress from needing to do the ritual actions the right way, getting “it”, avoiding making mistakes, and being always in awe of and attempting to imitate their teachers. If the teachings were designed to efficiently help seekers find the truth, then there would be no need any more for gurus and spiritual schools because students would be learning fast. Any teaching that creates a hierarchy of one who knows versus one who doesn't disempowers the student.

The only teachings, then, that I now can accept, are the ones that empower the student to know for him or herself. In this way of teaching, there is no hierarchy, no mystification. The knowledge is shared openly, in a simple form that is accessible to the student. This became very clear to me when I heard Toni Packer, a former Zen Buddhist meditation teacher who has left that tradition, speak about meditation. She is very careful to say things in a language that is direct and simple, and that

spiritually unsophisticated meditators (like me) can understand. Suddenly, it became clear to me what meditation was about, and I could not be fooled by the traditional teachings anymore. For years, I had been exposed to various traditions of spiritual teachings and never understood what I was doing when I was meditating. When Toni talked, I realized that I was already practicing meditation when I was being present with my feelings, and in my work, when I was present with another being's energies and body. Now I could simply sit quietly and be present with myself, my feelings, sensations, thoughts, and all sensory input that was coming in from my environment. It was this simple. Doing this, for long periods of time, the intelligence in all life started to become apparent, and at times, a sense of oneness with existence would emerge. The whole business about enlightenment was completely demystified. I realized that this "thing" doesn't exist, as something that people can only reach after much ordeal and practice. Enlightenment, or life itself, is available, at any moment, when we truly pay attention to what is presenting itself. In contrast, a Zen teacher's saying, "between out-breath and in-breath, jump into the sea of light," is poetic and suggestive, but it is not a very clarifying direction for what I am supposed to do. All this statement does, is confuse me with a mysterious image. In another context, when a yoga teacher says: "Clear the mind," what does she mean? Should I shame my mind for being so busy, all the time? Immediately most people's mind will be shamed with this guidance. The mind is like a child, jumping around and being alive and bouncy all day long. Clearing the mind is like telling a child: "Be quiet!" (Even when we are taught to let the thoughts that come in wander out again, we may be unable to let them go and feel badly about this failure). We impose an unnatural rule on the mind and the child by telling them to be quiet. We teach them to betray their true nature with this guidance. This creates resistance

and falsehoods. It creates many meditators who will feel guilty that their minds, even after many years of practice, are still bouncing around, doing their thing, or others who will pretend that their mind is clear because this is cool, in yoga terms, while pushing its activity somewhere into the unconscious underground. Without these rules, we just tend to the mind, as to the child, with awareness and attention. When the child/mind bounces around, we tend to that with our awareness. And if we tend to the lively child/mind with awareness long enough, we will find that the child/mind wears itself out and gets tired and comes to a resting point. Yet, when we try to quiet down the child/mind with rigid rules without following its natural flow, this creates resistance and possibly perpetuates the bouncy activity forever. To me, there is wisdom and tremendous intelligence in all of life, and I strongly feel that we better not mess with it by creating superimposed rules that usually are not in tune with the natural flow of things.

Part Three: Trusting Our Inner Knowing

Despite my criticisms, I have a deep love and respect for Zen Buddhism, Sahaj Yoga, Dr. Stone's writings on the Polarity theory, and many other systems of spiritual teachings. But I am trying to show an aspect in them that does not support individual knowing. Now, that I have stated my perspective on poisonous pedagogy, and on meditation as a vehicle for finding out truth, I can move on to evaluate the Polarity theory and the sources it is derived from, in that light.

Moving Towards Transparency

I have always loved Polarity for its spiritual framework. The teachings of the mystical path that Dr. Stone followed have been, in a subtle way, infused into the Polarity theory and given it its powerful effect. Many people today are hungry for meaning and spiritual connection in their lives. It is the connection with Source, the knowing of one's place in the universe that brings about healing. But at the same time that this spiritual quality gives Polarity its strength, it also creates some of its limitations and confusions. It is not widely known just how influential Dr. Stone's spiritual practice was on his Polarity model. This should be made clearer, so people know the historical and philosophical framework of Polarity. This knowledge, then, will help people have more perspective on and discrimination about the Polarity theory and give them the ability to accept or reject, more freely, certain aspects of it.

Accepting Every Part of Ourselves

One aspect that I have had trouble with is some of the wording in the Polarity theory. From the beginning, when I studied Polarity, I felt that some of its teachings

were too moralistic for me. I usually reworded them into my own language. Some of the attributes of the chakras, for example, reflect the ascetic, body-negative views of many yogic paths. Dr. Stone, in alignment with the teachings of his yogic path, called the emotion of the water chakra, "worldly love," and its passion, "lust." Both these terms, to me, mirror the belief that the desires of the senses are our enemies that get us in trouble, a viewpoint typical of poisonous pedagogy. I subscribe more to the Tantric (and maybe Taoist) view that holds the body and all its functions sacred and embraces them fully, transcending them by accepting them and flowing with them naturally. Feuerstein, describing the Tantric view, writes: "When we truly understand the body, we discover that it is the world, which in essence is divine," (Feuerstein, 1998). To negate functions and parts of this body-mind is to negate the divine source of the universe.

There is another aspect to not valuing the so-called "lower" chakras: By asking disciples to be celibate, as some paths do, and by not fully embracing (and actually avoiding) the natural expressions of these chakras, the danger for abuse of power arises. People who are not taught to reside fully and with mastery in all their layers of being including the felt sense in the body with all its survival urges and drives, may be less able to be in solid touch with their gut instincts, power, and vitality and, therefore, more prone to giving away their power or, unknowingly, even abusing other's power.

Taking the simple activity of paying attention to the felt sense in the body, I sense things in the lower three chakras just as I do in the higher ones. My felt sense does not tell me these chakras are lower. It does not even tell me that there are such things as chakras! I sense sexual arousal, hunger, anger, contraction, fear, the urge to have a bowel movement, pleasure, joy, relaxation. Thought informs me that these sensations make me the same as animals. My organism can reproduce, survive, kill, be eaten, run from threat, and all

the sensations and emotions that go with that are intelligently designed to help me fulfill these tasks. What makes me different from an animal, makes me human, is the ability to bring leadership to the animal in me, to guide these powerful energies in a wise way without either repressing them or unwisely acting them out. The felt bodily experiences in my lower chakras, if heard and understood deeply with wisdom, as a loving mother would listen to her child and acknowledge its experience, gives me very precise information about what I need and what actions I need to take. Without this information I cannot lead a clear, satisfying life.

It makes sense that many spiritual teachings recommended that the urges of the lower chakras, especially the power and the sexual chakra, be avoided. Seeing all the suffering that is caused by them, this seems like a good idea. The drawback, however, is that by discarding the information we get from them we lose the ability to make our life work. We disregard our existential knowing based on the incoming data, and then we wonder why we are not juicy, vital, joyful, and alive, and why we are not able to rely on our own inner guidance. Of course, we can develop ourselves partially, overdevelop our higher chakras and underdevelop the lower ones. However, I firmly believe that, if we got “enlightened” in this way (whatever that actually means), we would stand on shaky ground like a house on a weak foundation. Our animal nature is an essential part to our functioning that is as important to being whole as our spiritual nature!

Here is where the imbalance might show up: A teacher or practitioner who does not honor the lower chakra, may not pay attention to their expression and felt sense in his or her own body. Without checking in with the information there, he or she may miss important clues about the relationship with the student or client. He or she may teach knowledge or facilitate growth without empowering the student or client to make

contact with that knowledge or growth in his or her own body. Not being empowered to know for himself or herself, he or she would take in knowledge and growth that is not anchored in his or her own body. There is no space for choice either. Something is imposed as what’s “good” or “needed” without the client or student being empowered and encouraged to “check it out,” to see whether it fits with this body mind being at this time. I see a danger of misuse of power whenever we as teachers or practitioners are not living transparently while we work, that is, monitor our own experience as felt in the body or on any level while we teach or practice and let that be transparent. Being transparent and self-aware on all levels prevents the power imbalance that is always there as a potential when we assume the role of teaching or facilitating. By letting ourselves be seen as human and animal, both, we “become” a teaching rather than “do” it.

Let me use an example, here, to illustrate my point. Dr. Stone, from what I have heard, did very powerful sessions after which people were in a daze for days. Great change happened in a very short time. Of course, we are usually in awe of such great skill and mastery. However, I see a drawback to this quick change. People who are so shaken up probably really do need a master to stay safe. For a while, they are not grounded and have a hard time functioning. I wonder what would have happened if he had paid attention to his lower chakras. My guess is that he could have moved a lot slower. His goal for his clients and students was to become one with God. His approach was inspired by a spiritual path that emphasized the higher chakras and neglected the lower ones. As a consequence, these people needed a Master. While highly valuing Dr. Stone’s revolutionary contribution to body/energy work, I disagree with his bias toward the higher chakras and realms. I believe that we can become one with God each time we bring our full awareness, listen with all our

senses, to life happening in and around us. If we get fully absorbed in this activity, there is no space left for any thoughts that might tell us anything about what is higher or lower. Each sensation simply is.

From Hierarchical to Integral Structure

Another aspect of the Polarity theory that I have trouble with is its hierarchical structure, which is influenced by the yogic teachings of Dr. Stone's spiritual path and of the Indian yogic tradition. The concept of a hierarchy of creation seems limited to me. Even though I trust that the rishis of the Vedas were seers who saw the truth as it is, I believe that they too, once they gave it form by expressing it in words, were limited by the conditioning of their times. Any time we try to express truth in words, we are bound to limit it somewhat by what kind of words and images we choose, based on the times and culture we live in. The *rishis* of ancient India were used to thinking in hierarchical terms, I believe, and thus they perceived reality in those terms as well. We have to be careful how we receive these teachings. We need to listen for their essence, and not get too caught up with their forms. In this respect, to me, both, the teachings of Polarity and of the Path of The Masters are limited because they represent a patriarchal, hierarchical form that is outdated today. This hierarchical form is a concept of levels, a way to perceive reality characteristic of the rational mind of the patriarchal era which likes to divide things into parts and levels, but it does not necessarily reflect reality itself as it is. Certainly, when I meditate, I do not experience levels at all. As a concept, levels are valuable to help us understand and discriminate subtler and grosser perceptions and manifestations of life, but it is important to remember that these levels do not really exist and can actually be misleading. A hierarchical system sets up a structure of power with, in the case of spiritual teachings, a teacher at the top who knows, and a student

at the bottom, who doesn't know. This creates dependency and does not serve the student. Energy, reality, can only be contacted by each person, through direct experience. As one of my students said to me: "It is time that we realize that we as a humanity are now ready for each individual to have direct access to truth and no longer via a hierarchy of teachers who seemingly know more than us," (Mamet, 1999). She believes that teachers, today, should empower the student to access his or her own inner knowing that is innate in each of us.

I like to call all of life, other than the practice of presence (being aware or "paying attention"), whatever comes up that distracts us from being present in the moment, "the child." A child does not need morals, shaming, or forceful rules and practices. All it needs is attention and guidance with wisdom. (In this understanding I am deeply influenced by Margaret Paul's description of the process of inner bonding in her books, Inner Bonding, Becoming a Loving Adult to Your Inner Child, and Healing Your Aloneness, (Paul, 1992), and, of course, also by Alice Miller and Toni Packer.

To me, the act of paying attention is at the core of all spiritual teachings. If we pay attention to everything that life presents us, we can, with practice, connect with the universal intelligence in life. No outer guidelines are needed. All life is intelligent, but we sometimes forget to pay attention to this deep or hidden intelligence. We humans think we are so smart. But once we shift our focus from us and really pay attention to what IS all around us, we realize that we are not special. We are just like the birds, the mice, the droplets of dew on the grass. We partake in this life and are part of it. Who needs a teacher if all we need to learn is how to access this innate wisdom that is in us and all around us? Of course, that would be bad news for the spiritual teachers because there would be less need for them and less authority projected onto them. They would just be peers amongst

the seekers, helping those with less experience out when needed.

The more equal relationship of peers corresponds to Jean Gebser's idea of the "integral consciousness" which includes all the preceding phases of consciousness, (archaic, magical, mythical, and rational,) and transcends them, (Gebser, 1984). According to Gebser, a European cultural philosopher and one of my first mentors (I helped edit his collected works when I was in my early twenties), humanity is going not just through an outer history of events, but also through an inner evolution of consciousness. Up to now, as he describes in his main work, The Ever-Present Origin, we have lived through the archaic, magical, mythical, and most recently rational or dualistic phase of consciousness. Gebser describes the characteristics of each of these layers in depth and gives many examples from different cultural and historical situations. The task of our times, he says, is to move toward and realize integral consciousness, a consciousness that is aware of and integrates all preceding expressions of consciousness and transcends them, becoming, as Gestalt psychology would say, a whole that is more than its parts, a hologram, a four-dimensional consciousness in which space and time are both transcended. The term "self-actualized" describes such a person who has developed his/her full potential while integrating all previous developmental stages.

Learning to Rely on the Guidance Within

Besides the hierarchical structure of the teachings that I disagree with, there is another aspect that I find problematic for our times and for people in our Western culture. It is Dr. Stone's (as well as the Sahaja yoga teachings') statement that one cannot achieve self-realization without a living Master as teacher. In the Surat Shabd Yoga teachings, (and probably in many other traditional spiritual teachings) it is even stated that

the student must completely surrender to the master and do exactly what he says. This tradition has to be seen in its historical and cultural framework. In India, it is taken for granted that one has a master and that spiritual growth comes through devotional surrender to this master. This is a potentially harmful tactic in our Western culture that treasures the development of a strong ego in the world. Unless people have a strong ego they should not be encouraged indiscriminately to surrender it. While teachers can definitely be helpful to many of us, handing over our own power and ability to discriminate, even though it may help with avoiding any unconscious need to resist growth and stay in control, it can also become a hindrance when we stop listening to the intelligence that is revealed to us through our experience in the body. So we may feel something and then discard it or doubt it because it didn't come from the authority of the teacher. It "just" came from us. We unlearn, or never learn, to trust ourselves, especially if our knowledge is in the minority, does not agree with the main teachings. Only people who know themselves and are able to think independently can afford to transcend their ego and surrender. Even then, this person should not leave behind all independent thinking and common sense - an occurrence that has been repeated many times in spiritual communities that were built around a Master. Such a person who already has a well-developed sense of self does not really need a teacher, either. It is better for a teacher to encourage self-awareness in students and to help them connect with themselves. Not having a from-the-top-down structure helps that purpose.

Respecting All Paths to Truth While Also Honoring Personal Differences

Another thing I disagree with is how the Masters on the Sahaja path say that all other religions teach dogma only (except Taoism, which is described as very

similar to Sahaja yoga,) but that the living Masters of this Sahaja path alone are capable of helping students to reach enlightenment in this lifetime. Any time a teaching or teacher states that their path is better than others, I distrust it. I know in my heart that many paths, in essence, can lead to freedom. It depends on the student, not on the teachings!

The terms Creator, and Father are used a lot, in this teaching. Here, the masculine aspect of life is emphasized and the Feminine is neglected. To me, the Creator (Shiva) should not be mentioned without his partner, the Creatress, (Shakti) and the Sound Current definitely should not have to stand alone without his wife, the Light current. Where is the balance if all is male oriented? Again, these are outmoded relics of the patriarchal age that promote a hierarchy of what's better and what's less worthy.

Johnson, in The Path of The Masters, compares many religions with the path of the Masters and shows that the religions, except Taoism, are bound by the cultural framework they originated in, and then shows how the Sahaja path alone is not affected by cultural limitations and is a path of Universal teachings of the Truth unaffected by time and space. As I have shown, the Path of the Masters is, in its form, also affected by the cultural framework as are all teachings, and it is only in its essence that it represents Universal Truth, which is also common to all teachings.

He also makes the distinction that all other spiritual teachings and religions stop with the ultimate realization possible at the level of the crown chakra. In contrast, the Path of the Masters is one, that only starts its journey of meditation with the focus at the third eye center, and then describes eight more stages or levels, seven of them beyond the crown chakra, that lead to union with the ultimate Source. Johnson says that this path is different than all the others because it teaches the student higher levels of realization of Truth. To me, who

does not see levels as real, but as concepts of the mind, this differentiation has no meaning. And how can truth be divided into levels? The mind, and everything that is not part of being present with life in this moment (such as thoughts, and emotions that are based on these thoughts) is the child, (described in my handouts on Inner Bonding; Hammerli, 1994). The "child" is a reality that is based on the distortion of perception due to woundings. Without that, all the functions of the brain and the senses are purely functional and useful for the perception of reality as it is. Reality is life expressing itself in myriads of variation, without concepts or story added. Awareness, the act of paying attention to life, reveals this reality and helps us step out of the illusion of the mind's constructs.

Ultimately, it is love that heals. I believe that a simple teaching of meditation could be to love the "child," to bring awareness and loving presence to the distorted perceptions of reality. Through love, the authentic child emerges which is pure Life Force, spontaneous, creative, and intelligent. If loved and attended to like this, we become "like children," we are one with life, part of the river and the ocean, and no intermediary teachings or poisonous pedagogy are needed.

While Polarity is as dear to my heart as ever, I feel I have distanced myself, in these explorations, from some of its culture and time bound characteristics that are, in my view, antiquated. I have not lost any of my respect and love for Dr. Stone's inspiring work or for the power of Polarity Therapy. But I have stripped it of some of its traditional aspects that are no longer true, for me. I hope that these thoughts are of help to other seekers and people who love Polarity.

Part Four: Energy, Our Direct Contact with Life

Biofeedback, Polarity and Energy Awareness

In this paper, I have emphasized the need to trust our inner experience of energy beyond any system because each of us perceives energy in a unique, individual way. In a similar way, Biofeedback research shows us that each person is unique in his/her physiological functioning and make-up. "Biofeedback is simply the feeding back of a biological signal to you, the producer of the signal. Electronic devices record the biological signals. Through the information provided, you become able to change your physiological state in a desired direction. The information fed back is significant with regard to a predetermined goal. ...The information theory refers to the idea that biofeedback provides the person with information about his or her body's function. With increased information there is a more effective use of the body on many levels," (Criswell, 1995). "Biofeedback may be defined as the technique of using equipment (usually electronic) to reveal to human beings some of their internal physiological events, normal and abnormal, in the form of visual and auditory signals in order to teach them to manipulate these otherwise involuntary or unfelt events by manipulating the displayed signals," (John V. Basmajian in Criswell, 1995). The physiological events that are measured and amplified as feedback are: skin temperature, electro dermal response (conductivity or resistance), electrical activity of muscles and brain wave activity.

If we consider that the physiology of a person is interrelated and a direct expression of his/her energy flow and pattern, then we can say that biofeedback supports the knowing and the mastery of our inner reality, physiologically as well as energetically, and that

this inner reality is affected by our emotions, thoughts, life style, and spiritual connection.

Biofeedback helps with the fundamental task of bringing awareness to the body's physiological, emotional, and mental processes and learning to master them skillfully through self-awareness, not only in situations of rest and relaxation, but in any situations that occur daily, pleasant or unpleasant. In Polarity, all the tools ultimately serve to teach a person self-awareness so that he/she can learn to access the feedback that is available as direct guidance from within the body, the soma, the body experienced from within, as Thomas Hanna calls it. Being in touch with this inner experience provides direct, intelligent guidance in a moment-to-moment flow. Polarity is an educational system that trains people to access this inner wisdom on a daily basis rather than creating dependent clients who keep living without inner awareness and needing constant tune-ups to stay well.

Biofeedback has the same purpose, to help people get a sense of this inner reality and, over time, achieving mastery over it and creating lives that are in harmony with its needs. Both Polarity and biofeedback have the goal to help people become aware, integrated, and self-actualized beings, not only during the experience of the session, but ultimately in daily life. An inner-referenced person is not easily controlled or manipulated by outer forces, such as advertising, or any teachings and communications that seek to override individual discriminative thinking. Such an individual is an asset to humanity providing positive role modeling, guidance and vision. Biofeedback and Polarity help us tap into the wonderful mystery of the felt sense in the body.

Tapping Into the Mystery of the Felt Sense in the Body

Life flows through us as body sensation. It is through the felt sense, the animal or instinctual aspect of our organism, that we participate in existence. Even the

information that comes in through the five senses from the outside has reverberations in our body as subtle sensation. Thoughts evoke emotions, which in turn trigger physiological reactions that can be felt. Trauma energy can be carefully and slowly contacted and released by bringing awareness to the minutest sensations in the body. By paying attention to the felt sense, we can access directly, without any mediation, the infinite intelligence of the universe. This way, we come to know ourselves and begin to act intelligently. Thus, the body is the ultimate door to wholeness, the threshold between separation and oneness.

The following are some quotes from Peter Levine's book, Waking the Tiger, Healing Trauma, and from some other sources on the felt sense:

"Perhaps the best way to describe the felt sense is to say that it is the experience of being in a living body that understands the nuances of its environment by way of its responses to that environment. In many ways, the felt sense is like a stream moving through an ever-changing landscape. It alters its character in resonance with its surroundings..."

"This amazing sense encompasses both the content and climate of our internal and external environments...To live without the felt sense violates the most basic experience of being alive...It moves, shifts, and transforms constantly...Through the felt sense we are able to move, to acquire new information, to interrelate with one another and, ultimately, to know who we are. It is so integral to our experience of being human that we often take it for granted, sometimes to the point of not even realizing that it exists until we deliberately attend to it..."

"Studies (reported by Gendlin in *Focusing*) have shown that therapies employing the felt sense are generally more effective than those that don't. The felt sense helps people feel more natural - more grounded, more at home in their bodies. It can enhance our sense of

balance and coordination...It increases creativity. It is from the felt sense that we experience well-being, peace, and connectedness. It is how we experience the "self."...The felt sense is the means through which you learn to hear [your] instinctual voice. Most of us have little experience to help guide us to this awareness. We are used to living in a very disconnected way - a way that hasn't embraced our felt sense. Western culture does not teach us to experience ourselves in this way." (Levine, 1997, p.69-70)

Dick Price, a Gestalt therapist, said in an interview done in April 1985 (Esalen catalog January - June 2001): "Basic [awareness] practice is attention to breath, to movement, to kinesthetic sensations, to sensations in the body - feeling state, emotion, thought, image... The practice is not there to change anyone. What's important is contact. I function as an auxiliary to encourage and facilitate that contact - that is, contact with one's own experience not defined by anyone else from outside."

Here is a quote by D. H. Lawrence: "My belief is in the blood and flesh as being wiser than the intellect. The body-unconscious is where life bubbles up in us. It is how we know that we are alive, alive to the depth of our souls and in touch somewhere with the vivid reaches of the cosmos". (From Levine, 1998)

And Joan Tollifson, author of Bare-Bones Meditation writes: "[T]he body also offers the way home, for it is in fully meeting whatever appears as pure sensation (without interpretation) that we discover the emptiness of form - the undivided wholeness of being that has no solidity, no boundaries, no limits - that which no word or image can capture, in which everything is included," (Tollifson, 1997)

I would add to this that it is crucial for us practitioners and teachers to empower our clients and students by teaching them how to attend to the felt sense, so that they can contact their own inner knowing. And last but not least, as practitioners and teachers, we

can diminish the always-present danger for abuse of power by practicing or teaching in an embodied way, in touch with our own felt sense moment to moment. Rather than hiding behind the role of expert, we become transparent letting our humanness shine through. In this way, we can model inner-connected living by being present to our experience in a very grounded way. Our felt sense in the body, if we learn to be present to it, can become our inner spiritual teacher. It is the intelligence of universal life expressing itself in our body, which is as one with the universe as is the wave with the ocean.

How Do We Know About Energy?

In studying more than ten books on energy and healing and thinking about the meaning of the information in these books at length, I have come to three simple conclusions about energy:

1) Energy exists. Many cultures and individuals of all time periods acknowledge its presence. (See Lade, 1998, p.12; Eden, 1999, p. 16; Brennan, 1988, p.29.)

2) Energy is perceived in many different ways. Even though there are similarities in its descriptions amongst cultures, individuals, and time periods, and even though many contemporary energy practitioners rely on the few main energy systems available today as a framework, most prominently the Indian Yogic and Ayurvedic, and the Chinese Acupuncture systems, some authors admit, and I myself have observed in my students, that each individual has a unique way of perceiving energy. (Eden, p. 43; Sanders, 1989, p.11; my many years of experience as a teacher of Polarity energy work.)

3) Energy is affected by our state of consciousness, our thoughts and attitudes. (Brennan, p. 25; Liberman, 1990, p. xv; Gordon, 1999, p. 16.)

Even though energy is still difficult to scientifically measure, it is a well-accepted concept in the field of energy healing, today. Many indigenous cultures acknowledge its existence as an all-pervasive force in

nature that permeates the animate and inanimate world. In our culture, more and more people are trying to do experiments that show the existence of energy.

Biofeedback has often been used in this research of energy. Hiroshi Motoyama, for example, measured the very small light emission of chakras with special biofeedback equipment, (Motoyama, 1995). Dolores Krieger was monitored for brain wave activity with biofeedback equipment during a Therapeutic Touch healing session and her client was monitored simultaneously. (Dolores showed the meditative alpha-theta activity, but also fast beta. There have also been studies in connection with people who meditate. Different frequencies may be correlated to different kinds of energy work, energy states, and meditation. Barbara Brennan, in her book, Hands of Light, a Guide to Healing Through the Energy Field, (1987, p. 29), devotes a whole, interesting chapter to the history of such investigation into the human energy field.

Jeremy Narby did an interesting study on the parallels between various Shamanic cosmic creation myths and modern Microbiology research. In these Shamanic myths, the world is said to be created by a cosmic snake, or sometimes by a double-headed snake, or two snakes. The symbolism, obviously, reminds us of the Caduceus of Polarity, and of the Kundalini energy. However, Narby shows that the verbal and pictorial representation of this creative snake has strong parallels with our double helix model of DNA. In his view, we all have the potential to tap into the live knowledge stored in the data banks of the DNA of all living things and we are able to receive its energy communications and communicate with it. Through the light energy communications received by and emitted from the DNA, we are all linked through a Universal Language of life. (Narby, 1999)

If there is widespread agreement amongst different cultures and systems on the fact that energy

exists, there is not much agreement on how it is perceived. I believe that any descriptions on how energy manifests and flows in the human being are maps to the territory. They are not the territory itself. Maps help us find our way around in the realm of energy perception. They sharpen our own ability to perceive. But they are only guides, not ultimate truths. I am amazed at how few people acknowledge this fact. Mostly, the view is that if a system has been around for a long time, it must be true. This short-circuits the possibility for finding out for ourselves how energy feels, in this moment. If we approach perception of energy with a preconceived notion on how it should flow, our attention is already biased. Energy, in my experience, is very flexible and free; it will be whatever we want it to be. It is as vast and free as life itself. As Barbara Brennan writes, any part of it is a representation of the whole. We cannot divide it into parts in a dualistic manner. Just as the wave is not separate from the ocean, any aspect of energy is not separate from the whole of life. Energy is all there is. Energy is life. So, in order to perceive energy we must empty ourselves from any concepts and bring ourselves present in a way that interferes as little as possible with the energy we want to perceive. We must know that we cannot perceive something that is a representation of the whole without affecting it. The perceiver and the perceived are also not separate entities! Knowing that we are one, that we are what we observe when we try to understand energy leads us to the insight that it is the state we are in that affects how we perceive energy. We cannot simply look at energy. We need to acknowledge that our seeing and what we see are intrinsically intertwined.

This brings us to the third insight: Energy is affected by our state of consciousness, our intention, our thoughts, our emotions. In order to truly be able to perceive energy, in the moment, not by borrowing concepts about it, but by making direct contact with it in

the present moment, we need a practice of presence and paying attention, we need to meditate. The meditation I mean, once again, is not a meditation that follows guidelines of do this, repeat that, observe this or that, but a genuine practice of being openly available to what emerges as life, in the moment. If we empty out from concepts, in this fashion, as we simply are present with what is, even energy disappears. We simply are, or better, life simply is.

A wonderful way to tap into this mystery is the experience of biofeedback training. Sitting in front of the biofeedback screen, we are faced with a universe of responses in our physiology to many stimuli. We can get the sense of an ocean that is constantly moving, waves constantly forming and dissolving. We realize, that we are so much more complex and so much simpler than we thought. We are complex in the sense that what we thought was just an emotion or thought is actually happening as a myriad of responses in billions of cells. And we are simple, in the sense that our potential is in recognizing that we are one with this incredibly intelligent life, this awareness that sheds light, that guides every minute movement of energy or physiology with love, wisdom, and with incredible, unlimited presence. This awareness does not “do” anything, although the words used may make it appear so. Awareness emerges when the doing, the identification with the myriads of movements stops. It resides in utter stillness.

Closing Remarks

I must admit that the more I have tried to clarify the language and the terms in these pages, the more problems with using them came up. I was battling with centuries of thought and decades of my own learning. This text, to be clearer, would need several years of hard work, meditation, and attention to detail. For example, the word “reality,” I am aware, would need many pages to be explored in all its aspects, and so would the terms “inner bonding” and Gebser’s “integral consciousness,” to mention just a few. However, this baby wants to be born, and so I humbly offer this text in its very imperfect form, trusting, that I will be shown how to proceed from here.

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